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AUTHOR Marshall, Catherine
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ABSTRACT

Female researchers conducting field research in educational politics encounter special problems of access, entry, reciprocity, and ethics. Accordingly, this study focuses first on field research methods in policy settings as a general topic, then on problems specific to women in this area. A researcher must be aware of informal coalitions or networks of influence and power, the posturing and manipulation in policy games, and the special norms and traditions in policy settings. Appropriate ways are therefore proposed for managing role, entry and access, data gathering, reciprocity, ethics, and reporting in such settings. Because these issues must be managed differently at different stages in the research, separate sections are devoted to overcoming initial barriers, the exploratory stage, the focusing/analyzing stage, and methodological issues during the checking/testing phase. Thereafter, a discussion of male-female dynamics, coupled with a review of the pertinent literature and a consideration of women's inherent advantages and disadvantages in such research, leads to recommendations for appropriate role fronts for female researchers. (TE)

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ELITES, BUREAUCRATS, OSTRICHES, AND PUSSYCATS: MANAGING RESEARCH IN POLICY SETTINGS

Catherine Marshall

Graduate School of Education

University of Pennsylvania

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Elites, Bureaucrats, Ostriches, and Pussycats: Managing Research in Policy Settings

Field research conducted by female researchers in policy settings requires special problems anticipating access, entree, reciprocity and ethics. A researcher must plan to manage information about informal coalitions or networks of influence and power, the posturing and manipulation in policy games, and the special norms and traditions in policy settings.

This paper proposes appropriate ways to manage role, entree and access, data gathering, reciprocity, ethics, and reporting in policy settings. These research issues must be managed differently at different stages in the research.

Finally, this paper raises the issue of male-female dynamics in field research, suggesting appropriate role fronts for female researchers in policy settings. ELITE INTERVIEWING: FIELD STUDIES, POLICY RESEARCH: WOMEN RESEARCHERS

When we conduct research in the broad area called the politics of education, we delve into questions about how values get incorporated in policies through formal and informal decisionmaking, and we get into inter- and intra-agency communication and conflict. We enter a research setting where school board meetings, senate hearings, program evaluations and policy analyses are formal ceremonies and artifacts that cover elaborate informal strategic manipulations and complex political agendas. We enter a research setting where bureaucrats in agencies make policy anew by incorporating agency goals and procedures into the regulations, and by monitoring and staffing for policy implementation (Bardach 1980; Allison 1971; Wildavsky 1965).

The field study approach is especially appropriate for research that delves into informal processes in and among bureaucracies. Through field studies one can identify unstated goals of programs and policies. One can identify unstated policies and one can trace the lines of communication and influence in politics and decisionmaking, the informal groups and the tensions and conflicts that inevitably occur within and among organizations and groups.

When the research setting is the fast-action, games-playing, power-loving policy arena, when the area being researched is part of the game, special warnings and advice are needed. When the researcher is a woman, she needs to learn to press her advantages and protect herself. This article combines the advice and models from previous research with the field research experience of the author in order to suggest research strategies that should enable researchers to be effective and avoid blunders in policy settings.[1]

This article is based on the following assumptions:

1. that education researchers, sociologists and anthropologists (and not just political scientists and investigative journalists)

should study the settings where key people make decisions that affect economic, social, cultural and political life (Nader 1969);

2. that the policy arena is peopled by a special breed whose activities, interactions, and sentiments must be anticipated by researchers who would venture into that arena;
3. that the policy arena is like a game-board upon which organized groups vie for control; and
4. that gender is a variable affecting face-to-face interaction, requiring women researchers in policy settings to devise special role maintenance strategies.

The Field Study in Policy Settings

The field researcher who is unused to the political arena must prepare for meeting, observing, and interviewing a special breed of people. To follow the advice of Dexter (1964; 1970) and Whyte (1960) requires field researchers to know as much as possible about the world, the personality, the preferences, the traditions, the cycles and schedules, the motivations and the concerns of the people they study. From a review of literature, especially literature on decisionmaking, research and evaluation utilization in policymaking, and recent history of policy formulation and implementation in education/social areas, field researchers begin to see the policy arena as an open system that has formal and informal structures for allocating power and resources and for conveying information. This framework views decision-making as a process of constant negotiating and interpreting. Decision-making processes are constrained by personalities, conflicting agency goals, standard operating procedures, pressures to compromise to meet the needs of special interests and limited time, expertise, information, and resources.

This literature points out that values, traditions, structures, and personal and political needs impact upon decisionmaking. The policy arena's openness to ideas and concerns of various groups and individuals will vary according to the issues, the turbulence of the policy arena, and the structures in the policy environment. However, there will always be "outs" struggling to get inside the decisionmaking process, pressuring, rallying, propagandizing, and using all sorts of ingenious devices to try to get their way and to open up the policy arena (cf. Iannaccone 1977; Emery and Trist 1965; Marshall 1980; Schattsneider 1960).

One group of actors in the policy arena includes politicians, their staff, consultants, and lobbyists. They arrived in the arena either by developing a talent and an affinity for pressuring to get their way or by being good behind the scenes. They like power. They play chess with people, programs, and institutions. They like being in positions where they can further their own values (and those of their constituents) and they delight in the strategizing and the bargaining and posturing in policymaking. Similarly, the staff or consultants of policymakers generally obtain and retain their jobs by developing abilities to gather information and recommend postures, strategies, and policies that will enhance the power of the policymaker.

Lobbyists and individuals with special interests also enter the policy environment to pressure for their own values. Their ideals, purposes and/or livelihood depend on how well they promote and pressure, seduce and strategize, and fashion deals, coalitions, and compromises.

The myriad agencies are full of policy actors. Bureaucrats in agencies pressure for their livelihood, their agencies' reputation and turf, and their

values in the policy arena (Wildavsky 1964). Agency heads, executive officers, superintendents, and their immediate staffs are political animals who pressure to influence policy and resource allocation to the advantage of the agency, themselves, and their constituents or clients (Murphy 1980). They affect policy when they analyze, judge, train, and facilitate or slow down policy formulation and policy implementation (Murphy 1973; Crozier 1964).

If the actors in policy arenas are people pressuring and strategizing and manipulating to get their own values and needs in place in policy, in budgets, in the media, and in regulations, this is as it should be. They are playing politics and they would not survive if they did not. However, they present problems for researchers who are shocked by politicking and manipulation, or who, unaware, get caught up in the political game. The researcher must devise appropriate roles or fronts to facilitate entree and access, and data collection strategies that are effective without violating the norms of this environment. The researcher must know what is sacred, sensitive, and valued in this environment in order to avoid violating trust. Data collection and research reporting must be managed ethically; researchers must reciprocate in some way for the time, the information, the access, and the connections that these policy-setting actors have provided.

Getting Your Foot in the Door

Most data collection for field research in policy settings will be done by open-ended, focused, and casual interviewing, by participant observation, and by document analysis. Policy settings present barriers to researchers. Getting in, staying, and getting relevant data means convincing elites that the researcher is trustworthy and that the research is valuable enough to be given time. It means convincing reluctant bureaucrats to allow access to

to documents and to reveal the story behind the documents.

The ideal data collection with elites in policy settings would be a social relationship in which the interview is a process of open and frank communication between equals. However, elites are people who are interviewed frequently, who are accustomed to controlling dialogue and information flow, and who are extremely busy and must spend their time on efforts perceived as valuable to them. As people in the public eye, they are easy to observe and to meet in their meet-the-people times. This, however, does not provide sufficient access for relevant data collection when the research question delves into behind-the-scenes behavior and motivations. The researcher must take on the challenge of attaining entry and access to elites by careful planning. The challenge is to devise ways to make the research effort seem valuable to the interviewee and then to provide assurance that the researcher can be trusted and is knowledgeable enough to avoid harming the elite's political or personal efforts.

Consultants, political advisors, secretaries, assistants and others on the support staff of elites may be trained to protect the elites from university researchers, journalists, lobbyists, and crazies. That protection may take the form of not allowing access, of providing the requested information without allowing access to the elites, or delaying or postponing the meeting time, or of interrupting the meeting after a short interval. The researcher must anticipate these protective behaviors so as to be prepared to overcome them.

Most researchers, (Roethlisberger and Dickson 1939; Riesman and Benney 1956; Dean 1954; Whyte 1960; Bauer, deSola-Pool and Dexter 1963; Gorden 1969; Dexter 1970), report that they contacted their interviewees through someone

they knew personally. Dexter learned to explain the purpose of the interview at the beginning. He suggests, however, that explanations should not be complex; elite interviewees tend to feel that complex matters ought to be attended to by specialists. The civil defense study reported by Kincaid and Bright (1957) is a case in point: the businessmen who were their hoped-for primary source of data refused to cooperate because the researchers overexplained themselves.

Researchers in policy settings may need to obtain information from bureaucrats in government agencies. These people are found in many varieties depending upon their backgrounds, their career goals, their opportunities for mobility, and their connections with other agencies and elites. Some behave like elites, especially those in top positions in the agency hierarchy and those aspiring to top positions in the agency or to political careers. Some behave like ostriches. Scarred from past battles initiated by investigators, evaluators, analysts, and researchers, they hide from any intrusion that might interrupt their orderly and secure existence.

Bureaucrats who wish to control the release of unfavorable information may use delaying and timing strategies. They may release small amounts of information, give circuitous information, release information after the researcher has labored to obtain it by other means, and create difficult circumstances for collecting data (e.g., inconvenient times, uncomfortable conditions). They may insist that the researcher peruse documents only when a busy official is present and may not allow the researcher to make copies. Gordon, Heing, Gordon and Divorski (1978) show how Chicago bureaucrats created barriers to researchers even when information was supposed to be public. An information keeper may invoke one of the many exemptions in the

freedom of information policy or use quasi-legal tactics such as mingling threatening information with personnel data that is not public. Threatening data may simply be uncollectable. It may be coded in irretrievable form or kept in files "under investigation." Public information offices may serve as a bureaucratic layer that guards the agency. Finally, bureaucrats may seek to devalue any negative information or analysis detrimental to the agency.

Bureaucrats often know that they hold power only as long as they hold the information or access that a researcher desires. A bureaucrat's job is to manage information and access; he exercises the discretion to stall threatening individuals simply by declaring the information non-existent, missing, located in another agency, or confidential. He may be flexing his power or he may have valid political reasons for concealing information or denying access. The bureaucrat has little to gain from helping a researcher gain access and information; in fact he could lose face, connections and opportunities if he or his agency is identified in any negative report.

Researcher Strategies to Overcome the Initial Barriers

A field researcher who devises appropriate entry approaches, who analyzes the setting and creates an appropriate researcher role, who is open to a variety of data collection strategies, and who exudes an air of trustworthiness, savvy, and ethical behavior may overcome the barriers in policy settings. The researcher must plan and work for this to happen. This planning is done after initial scouting allows the researcher to identify several key informants. Key informants are people who know the policy setting and who seem willing to give advice and information. They know where and how informal information exchange and decisionmaking occur. They know which people to

handle with kid gloves who may try to enlist the researcher in their cause, and so on. The best informants are people who used to be "ins" and are now "outs" but are not bitter--those who have a sense of humor about the games in the policy setting--lighthearted cynics who have no particular cause to promote or program to protect. People who have carried out a variety of functions over the years in the policy setting may be excellent informants. Old sages may be good at this, especially when they enjoy explaining things to younger people. Younger go-getters may be good too; they have a keen sense of what works in a variety of policy settings, since they constantly observe people and activities in order to get clues on moving up in the policy setting.

The role and entree tactics devised by the researcher will determine whether or not the researcher can get in and get substantive data. Gordon et al. (1978) emphasize that the researcher must find ways to turn keepers of information into givers of information by increasing the advantages of giving, increasing the disadvantages of withholding, and by short-circuiting the agency system for information giving. A reluctant bureaucrat or staff person may become a giver of information if the researcher can show how non-cooperation will embarrass the agency or how failure to provide data could be seen as incompetence. Such threatening should not be needed, however, if the researcher can short-circuit the information flow system. The researcher can gain access by appearing innocuous (here, the student role is especially useful), finding staff people who have not been socialized to adhere to the information-giving rules, or finding people who, for personal, professional, or political reasons may be willing to defy the rules and come forth with documents and inside information. The researcher who chances upon, or plans

to find something in common with a keeper, may have an instant, easy way to turn a keeper into a giver. Attending the same school, playing the same sport, having the same ethnic background, or having a similar family situation may open up access with many bureaucrats and staff people.

Overcoming access barriers to legislators, top officials and community leaders requires the researcher to devise ways to be appealing to the elite person. First, the researcher must underplay association with any undesirable or bothersome group. A congressman may have a low opinion of academic types or find the flow of political science students through his door quite tiresome. Researchers must convey a message to the official that they differ from the typical academic or student because they have knowledge and connections. The researcher conveys to the official that this particular official is the only person who has the answers, that his cooperation is essential to the research.[2] If it is not, then one should not seek the interview. Researchers can overcome barriers if they can appear as valuable, politically knowledgeable people with important connections in high places or with constituents. Name-dropping may be essential for access to elites.

Becker and Myers (1974) found that by simply walking past gatekeepers, as if you belonged there, and going directly into the top official's inner sanctum was quite effective. Similarly, they avoided the use of phone calls or formal letters requesting information and explaining the purpose of the request for interviews. Such formal requests encourage the gatekeepers and the formal structures to put up barriers. A face-to-face self-introduction to a top official, on the other hand, frequently allows access. Researchers should take advantage of serendipitous opportunities to introduce themselves (in elevators, airport lobbies, washrooms, bars) to set the stage for a sub-

sequent request for an interview. Public officials lose face if they publicly refuse an audience.

Attaining access is merely getting a foot in the door, however. The development of substantive data gathering and insights for analysis of data will depend upon the researcher role, assurances and demonstrations of good judgement and ethical behavior, sensitive data collection, and offers of reciprocity.

The researcher who plans a field study in policy settings can be guided by Figure One. The figure reminds the researcher that field research has three stages--exploration, focusing and analyzing, and testing and checking. The figure lists the issues in field research and points out that the researcher deals with the issues differently, depending upon the stage of the research.

Insert Figure One about here

Field Study Issued in the Exploratory Stage in Policy Settings

The strength of the field study approach is that the setting, the activities, and the actors define the research focus and determine the relevant variables. In the exploratory stage, the researcher, as participant observer, is a highly receptive instrument for recording--a sponge. Geer (1964) illustrates this stage of the first days in the field noting that the researcher must record and observe as much as possible while he or she is open to surprises and unused to the norms and patterns of the setting.

In the policy setting, this exploratory stage presents problems. One cannot phone a senator and say, "I read in The Roanoke Tribune that the real

Figure One: Managing Field Study Issues in Policy Settings

RESEARCH ISSUES	RESEARCH STAGE		
	Exploratory	Focused/Analyzing	Checking/Testing
Role (What front do you show?)	The "Chauncey Gardiner" approach; Naive.	Cool and competent, savvy but not threatening; "Passing".	Native; Devil's Advocate.
Entree and Access (How do you get in and stay in?)	Harmless Constituent; League of Women Voters; Harmless Academic.	Having pull, connections. Knowledgeable, but unobtrusive.	Insider, but preparing for exit.
Reciprocity (What do you do for them?)	Harmless listener; Admirer.	Potential information giver; Potential messenger; Potential player.	Potentially powerful member.
Data Gathering (How do you get information? What sorts of information?)	Sponge; Open to all data; open-ended interviewing and participant observation.	Focused interviewing and observation. Mapping; Counting; Observing lines of communication, forms of power, norms, activities. Compiling Histories. Document Analysis.	Manipulating. Experimenting. Triangulation of data. Search for explanation of negative instances.
Ethics (How do you stay honest and prevent harm?)	Self-protection.	Protection of confidentiality; Protection through vagueness plus alternate sources.	Known; An insider, playing the game.
Reporting (What do you tell people?)	Staying vague about intents of research.	Obfuscation; Resisting pressure to give tentative findings by giving harmless reports of insignificant findings.	Checking with sources and renewing permission. Making decisions of whether to report in obscure academic journals or to disseminate in policy settings.

decisions about education policy are made behind the scenes. Could I come and watch you?" One must adopt a role that is believable and nonthreatening, but still allows entree and provides for reciprocity.

I suggest the Chauncey Gardiner approach. Chauncey, a character in the book and movie "Being There," left a sheltered life where he knew nothing but gardening and television. He suddenly entered the policy arena, becoming the president's key advisor. When people asked him what he was doing, he said something vague that made little sense, but they made their own sense out of it. In the same manner, when people wanted something from him (for example, when the First Lady wanted him to make love to her), he avoided accommodating them. However, the vague and naive way in which he acted avoided offending them. In order to figure out what was going on, he collected information from absolutely everything he saw; he processed/analyzed this information using his prior conceptual frameworks--gardening and television. The only ethical issue he dealt with was the lack of ethics of those around him as they tried to use him for their various purposes. His ethical issue was self-protection.

Similarly, the field researcher will enter the policy setting, open to all modes of gathering information. Hopefully he will use more appropriate and varied conceptual frameworks to guide data analysis, to organize and make sense of the patterns of behavior and communication than Chauncey did. The Chauncey Gardiner naivete works well in the exploratory stage; the naive, wide-eyed, manipulatable, curious front is often appealing to informants. The reciprocity issue is handled well if informants see the listener as a harmless but fascinated listener who will patiently sit through recountings of exploits and personal renditions of the way things are. Politicians usually

have to work to get audiences; bureaucrats seldom enjoy the human luxury of expounding their views to interested outsiders. People like to talk about their lives and their work and their views. Researchers who respond with enough encouraging facial expressions interspersed with ample "really?" and "no kidding" responses, will be giving their informants enough in return for the information they receive.

Although the Chauncey Gardiner approach sufficiently manages role, reciprocity, data collection, and ethics in the exploratory stage, it may not handle entree. The researcher must get past gatekeepers and must eventually short-circuit information-giving rules. As secretaries and bosses make judgements about appearances, credentials, intentions, clout, and sponsorship of the researcher, the researcher, in the exploratory stage, has a dilemma. It is important to tell very little of his intent in order to get the informants and interviewees to present data within their own frame of reference. The more the researcher tells about the intent of the research, the more the informant will be responding to the researcher's problem focus and definitions of variables. This defeats the purpose of the exploratory stage of research.

How to get in then? An alternative may be to present the Bumbling Academic or what I might call the League of Women Voters approach. Present yourself as non-threatening but respectable and potentially useful, an educated and respected and working-within-the-system sort of person. Bureaucrats will have no reason to turn you away as long as you do not make large demands for time; politicians cannot refuse to give you an audience since you fit into the constituent category--the sort of person no politician can affort to offend.

Field Study Issues at the Focusing/Analyzing Stage of Research

As the research progresses through the exploratory stage and patterns emerge from the descriptive data and from tentative trial analyses, the research becomes more focused. The second stage of field research entails mixing data collecting with data analysis. The sponge approach is inefficient; the researcher must be more purposeful and directing in data collection. The researcher cannot appear naive because by now he/she is too well-known and because he/she wants to focus and direct the responses in interviews and to observe interactions in specific settings. At this stage of the research, new approaches are appropriate.

The most workable research role for this stage is "passing" as a regular fixture in the environment, not as a member with a role and purpose in the policy setting but as a tolerated person. In the policy world, this requires appearing intelligent, cool, competent, and worldly, but not so much so as to draw attention or to appear to be too clever. Similarly, the researcher must gain entree in specific settings by using pull, connections, prestige, and by appearing knowledgeable but sympathetic and non-threatening. Many subtle devices can be used. Business cards accompanying requests for appointments can inform people of the researcher's important connections. The researcher can comment on office objects in a way that demonstrates his/her connections and background--e.g., saying, "So you're a Harvard man--did you work with (insert the name of some V.I.P.)?" Or, if that is too obvious, the researcher can use an introduction that includes much name- and place-dropping as, for example, beginnina a face-to-face or telephone conversation as follows:

> Senator Thrashtorn, I am Linda Researcher from X University, and I have been researching education policymaking, focusing on the Day Care Educa-

> tion legislation. For the last three months, I've talked with people in the Governor's office, a lot of the academic experts who have influenced the legislation, and people in the Department of Education. I know you've played a role in this legislation so it's very important for me to get your views.

This approach tells the Senator that you know a lot about the issue, that you really need his particular views, that you have been tested by gatekeepers in other agencies already, that you may know things about other agencies and constituencies that he might useful and, finally, that you may be informed and important enough someday to become a participant in the policy arena yourself. As he allows himself to be interviewed, he will be "picking the researcher's brain" for sources of information about his constituents, and he may be judging whether or not the researcher might be useful in future hearings or campaigns. He may allow the interview with the intent of obtaining information from the researcher about the views and strategies of people in those other agencies; he may attempt to use the researcher to spread general information about what an open, sincere, hard-working man he is, or to spread specific information to other participants in the policy setting in order to set the stage for future strategies.

Data gathering at this stage is tricky; the researcher is ready to seek answers to specific questions. The researcher must glean answers to these questions from piles of data including long monologs wherein the subject exercises his ego with displays of his expertise, power, and connections. The researcher should not redirect the subject to the research focus, since these displays may have a wealth of information that can be mined during analysis. Further, these monologs are necessary for entree and reciprocity. The subject needs to ensure that the researcher--as potential player, messenger, and interpreter in the policy arena--will be understanding and praising of the sub-

ject's activities and sentiments before he will be receptive to questions. The subject needs to enjoy the interview.

At this stage, the researcher cannot just make assertions that the research will be conducted in an ethical way or that confidentiality will be respected. The researcher must actually display his/her ability to protect sources. Subjects will devise tests of this ability by asking for details about who else was interviewed, by watching for researcher's reactions to statements to see how much other people have revealed. Vagueness helps here. Researchers can respond by retreating into abstract, general, vague responses, replete with academic jargon. If the subject says, "Did Mr. Y tell you about ABC?" the researcher can reply by saying that lots of people talked about ABC and there was mention in newspapers or policy documents.

At this stage in the research, one must make decisions about reporting the research. Senator Thrashtorn needs to know whether his words will be reported as "Senator Thrashtorn said," or as "Three out of the forty Senators said . . . . " If he will be identifiable, either by name or by a position, and the research will be reported in any setting or publication where his constituents, colleagues, enemies, family or any significant others would have access, then he may demand the right to review the report and delete sections. Although the entree negotiation resulted in his willingness to be interviewed, it did not guarantee that he would be open, truthful, unbiased, and frank. The researcher must renegotiate to get openness. Researchers can offer to disguise identity where possible; they can promise not to use quotes but merely use the interview to gain an understanding of events; they can suggest that the subject make designations about which parts are off the record, or they can promise to allow the subject to

edit any quotes that are used in the research report.

On the other hand, the subject may want publicity, and may want to be identified, so the ethical issue again becomes one of the researcher's protection against being used and the reciprocity issue re-enters. Again, vagueness helps. The researcher should talk about the possibility that the report will be of interest in the mass media (thus reaching constituents) and that others in the policy arena might see it, but that the primary area of dissemination is in academic journals. Such an answer maintains entree, but makes no promise that the researcher will be a public relations agent. Thus researcher role, entree, reciprocity, ethics, reporting, and data collection strategies are inexorably intertwined during the stage of focusing and analyzing data in the policy arena.

Methodological Issues during the Checking/Testing Phase

During the checking/testing phase, field study research issues must be managed differently. Policy actors will have heard about the researcher, and the intent of the research and data needs will be well-defined.

Entree, role, and reciprocity must be handled with the realization that the researcher may be seen as an insider. They can no longer maintain the front of the harmless academic. After being on the scene, observing hearings, being seen at restaurants with lobbyists, having conversations with legislative staff, and after interviewing a number of people, the researcher will be seen as a fixture in the setting. They are seen as possessing a wealth of information in a setting where information is power.

Reciprocity demands and ethical issues will loom large as the researcher is viewed as a potential member--a person who could play a role in the policy arena. Some people will be overly helpful, setting up appointments and direct-

ing the research activities; the researcher may have to meet people as a courtesy or as a way of reassuring people who are trying to keep the researcher sympathetic to their side of an issue. The researcher may be tempted to overuse this new-found power. Reminders about avoiding undue intrusion in the setting are needed at this stage of the research. If researchers are beginning to use their power by providing information to a policy group or participating in a campaign, they may be "going native"--behaving like the policy actors. When that happens, researchers should either start job hunting in the setting and forget about doing research or else pull back from the setting for a time to reassess the research role before continuing the research.

Harmless manipulation may be useful for data gathering at this stage. The researcher has already found patterns and categories, and now needs to check their validity by devising tests. Many of these tests will be analyses of previously collected data, but the researcher may wish to devise simple tests. For example, suppose the researcher has found that legislative staff seldom seek research to inform policy but will use any piece of pertinent research that comes into their hands. A harmless experiment might entail the researcher casually dropping off a research article to a staffer, then tracing its appearance in hearings, documents, and discussions.[3]

In the checking and testing stage, the researcher is also preparing to leave the policy setting. Reciprocity and reporting issues must be confronted. Some policy actors will have developed an expectation that the researcher remain as a member of the policy arena and they will have made subtle or overt propositions to engage the researcher to be on their side. The researcher must devise face-saving exit stories. The most workable story is

the retreat-to-academia story. By saying that the university setting has demands and rewards, the researcher tells the policy actor he/she will no longer be a threat or ally (academics are seen as impotent and perhaps incompetent). They can avoid looking foolish for having seen the researcher as a member because now they can put the researcher back into a category that they control, that of an ivory-towered, abstract, unworldly, and irrelevant bumbler.

Similarly, as policy actors recognize the possible power of the accumulated information of the research, they are concerned about the mode of reporting. The researcher should provide reassurance by letting it be known that the research will be reported in academic journals. Where that is not possible, or where the research is very relevant to policy concerns and will be used to inform or to buttress policy positions, the researcher is indeed a native; the researcher and the research are tools in the policy arena and researchers cannot survive unless they become political animals (see literature on the use of research in policymaking, e.g., Marshall 1980; Cohen 1970; Weiss 1977). The norms, ideals, activities and style appropriate in academia will not wash in a political scene.

The Woman Researcher in the Policy Arena: Handling Elites, Bureaucrats, Pussycats and Ostriches

Women researchers face additional dilemmas because of male-female dynamics and because of societal expectations of appropriate roles for women. This section addresses the dynamics of the woman field researcher in the policy arena.

Golde's Women in the Field (1970) sets the stage for the discussion of women researchers' dilemmas in field research. She illustrates the special

problems of women anthropologists. Golde suggests that women in the field will have the following special problems:

1. they will be denied access to male-dominated groups;
2. they will be subject to sexual advances;
3. their researcher roles will conflict with people's assumptions of proper women's roles. They will be given labels that affect their safety, emotional stability, research activities, and access;
4. any collaborative work with male colleagues may be seen as the work of the males;
5. decisions for appropriate entry and role manipulation for maintenance of access may be interpreted by the male research community as using her sex as a bribe to get information (Golde 1970); and
6. the findings of women researchers may be seen as less credible and publishable because of the researcher's sex.

Women researchers must be especially aware of research issues like role, reciprocity, data collection, ethics, and reporting. These issues will have differential impact on them, simply because they are women. Policy actors are predominantly male. People in the policy setting may thrust a role upon a woman researcher. These stereotyped roles may be advantageous in the exploratory phase of research but prevent access and entry later on.

Typical roles, such as the naive, harmless, admiring listener, will come all too easily for women; many policy actors are quite accustomed to seeing women in such roles, running political campaigns and providing staff assistance in agencies. They are used to seeing loyal, hard-working women who would not

challenge them. This assigned role will serve women well at the exploratory stage, allowing entree to formal settings, e.g., offices and formal meetings. As long as the researcher is well-served by a role that is harmless, powerless, unobtrusive, and manipulatable, a woman has an advantage. It is difficult, however, for a woman researcher to get beyond that role to the cool, savvy, competent role, such as the native or devil's advocate role appropriate at later research stages. Women researchers have difficult gaining entree as persons with pull and they will seldom be seen as insiders. They will have easy access as long as they do not probe, seek entree to observe informal or male-exclusive settings, or otherwise "blow the cover" of the typical woman's role. After being in the setting for a period of time, however, a researcher must begin to follow up on leads from previous data collection. She should try to observe lobbyist-legislator activity in bars, clubs, parties. She must get legislators, staffers, reluctant bureaucrats to see her as savvy enough to understand their informal negotiating, their maneuvering. She must become enough of an insider to be trusted; she must become part of the setting and take a role that looks like that of a policy-setting insider. The easiest way to obtain such a role is through a key informant or sponsorship. If the woman researcher is seen as closely associated with a respected or well-liked person who is on the fringe of the policy setting being researched, e.g., a lobbyist who gives parties, a bureaucrat with no involvement in education policy, she will be viewed as an insider.

Naturally, sponsors must be chosen carefully so that entree, access, and role will not be compromised. It is dangerous to the progress of the research if a woman if over-identified and seen as belonging to any individual or group that touches on the area being researched. Also, she will lose

credibility as a researcher if she is seen as a policy-setting "groupie." In a setting where egos are large and dining, drinking and partying are part of the work, a naive-appearing woman may not be able to fashion a role that allows her to conduct research. She must prepare and practice the role of the competent and savvy researcher who is not uncomfortable in bars, in "smoke-filled rooms," hearing discussions of deals, nepotism, trade-offs, graft and manipulation of the truth. She must prepare a role that allows her to be part of this setting yet maintain her integrity as a researcher.

Women also face special ethical issues. First, they face the reverse-ethics issue of avoiding being used and seduced. On the other hand, women researchers may face the ethical dilemma of whether or not to take advantage of the male bureaucrats and elites who find them attractive. Such men (the "pussycats") enjoy the attention and the captive audience of a woman researcher, and the woman can encourage them to talk openly and to provide easy access to other policy settings, documents and insights. Again, role preparation and practice are important--if a researcher can devise a role that is attractive but non-committal, she can control the situation to maximize data collection while avoiding having to reciprocate more than she wishes.

Women researchers have special advantages that help offset their special problems. Golde notes that in societies where women are viewed as weaker and less able to withstand harsh climates or difficult tasks, women researchers get special protection and assistance. Women researchers, when viewed as "unnatural" women who do not need to fulfill cultural norms, may be excused from most societal constraints. They may be seen as either too weird or too harmless to bother with or to constrain. If this happens, they may be allowed as observers in many settings where others would be excluded. Bowen,

in Return to Laughter (1964), describes how her designation as 'witch' enabled her to gain access to male-exclusive ceremonials and to get crucial insights from leaders of factions as they tried to get her power on their side. In the meantime, she retained her access to the women's and children's arenas by being a woman and by using children as helpers, translators, and guides.

Another advantage, very useful for access and for data gathering, is that women help other women. In policy settings there exists a huge underclass of functionaries, from legislators' secretaries to copyroom assistants to various keepers-of-the-files, and most of them are women. A woman researcher may find much in common with these women functionaries. By sharing common experiences, the woman researcher can develop research aides in many positions. A secretary may agree to call every time a relevant item appears. If a reluctant bureaucrat has dictated that you can view reports only for one hour and does not allow xeroxing, his long-suffering aide may give you the drafts of the reports, or, at least, may provide you with a comfortable workspace.

Women may have special data gathering abilities. Women may be very tuned in to subtle communications, may see interactions that define norms in a setting, and may be especially skilled at getting others to cooperate with their research and to open up about their motivations and their disappointments. Women have negotiated their way to adulthood by developing these skills. In a society where husbands, fathers, brothers and male bosses have held power over them, women have become skillful in observing subtle messages that show affinity, sympathy and alliance, and in seeing facial expressions and hearing changes in voice tone and speech that are indicators of norms

and norm violations. Many women have had to develop skills to manipulate men--for permission, for money, for freedom to develop, and so on--throughout their lives. These same skills can be used to a woman researcher's advantage in manipulating access to the ostriches who hide behind busy schedules or bureaucracy rules. These same skills may be used to get an elite to forget his practiced manner for handling interviews.

The idea that women have special advantages is not merely theoretical. Psychologists have shown that women have better recall of details than men; when they view a setting briefly, women remember far more than men about the participants, their arrangement, the accoutrements, the general context wherein people interact. This ability may explain the folk term "woman's intuition"--that women see and analyze more from the entire context than most men (Levy 1980). Such abilities give women an advantage in any observational research. Such abilities are especially valuable in policy settings where motivations are masked, behind-the-scenes interactions are the substantive ones, and formal settings are ceremonies to legitimate informal interactions. Such abilities are also valuable for uncovering vulnerable points in the barriers set up by reluctant bureaucrats.

Summing Up and Final Advice

Researchers who conduct field studies in policy settings can, of course, learn much from the advice and examples of previous researchers. Becker and Myers (1974) give us advice on how to negotiate our way through a bureaucracy. Whyte (1955), in his valuable appendix on method, shows the importance of a sponsor-informant-research partner, "Doc," for conducting community studies. Dalton (1959) describes managing covert research as a full participant in a business organization. Dexter (1970), Whyte (1960), Richardson, Dowhenrend

and Klein (1965) tell us how to handle interviewing. Humphrey (1970) shows how playing a particularly useful role, as "Watch Queen," can allow access and foster credibility and trust. Murphy (1980) has a useful guide for policy analysts and evaluators. Spradley (1979) is especially useful for his explication of research role management when studying people whose activities, language use, values, and norms are very different. Pelto and Pelto (1978) wrote a short piece on gender and fieldwork, noting that "female anthropologists . . . generally have the difficult task of making it clear to local males that they are sexually unavailable" (p. 189).

The researcher who conducts field studies in policy settings, however, must take the next step of applying these words of advice and examples to the particulars of the policy setting. The general principles of field work apply as well to the policy setting researcher, but that researcher must make the extra effort to apply those principles to the fascinating world of policymaking. Women researchers must interpret the advice and examples with awareness that they have advantages and disadvantages because of their sex.

ENDNOTES

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[1]This research covers two different state education policy arenas spanning the years from 1972-82 and in school administration during 1978.

[2]Frequently legislative staff and middle or lower level bureaucrats know much more about the specifics of policies, programs and operations than elites.

[3]Of course this is not unobtrusive if it gives an advantage to one side in a policy struggle. Nor is it unobtrusive if it offends the sensitivities or needs of any group or individual. Thus researchers cannot attempt such intervention unless they have knowledge of the needs, motives, and norms of involved people and groups. This knowledge is essential for avoiding violations of trust and intrusive researcher presence.

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